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Voter registration a phone call away

CONCORD (AP) – While former Virginia Gov. Mark Warner spoke in the auditorium, students at Concord High School played with their cell phones.

Not only did Warner not mind, he was encouraging it.

Warner kicked off a national voter registration drive Friday by demonstrating how cell phone technology can get people the forms they need to register to vote.

He showed students how to contact a nonprofit group called Mobile Voter and use a text message that will get them a copy of their state's voter registration form when they provide an e-mail address.

"We want to encourage more and more people to vote, particularly young people to register," he said.

To sweeten the pot, Warner's political action committee is offering prizes to young people who get the most people to register by the end of September.

The contest is being run through TxtVoter.org, Mobile Voter's free service to help register voters.

Warner says he's the first American politician to promote the new system and he talked about his background in developing cell phone technology. Before becoming governor, Warner was co-founder of the company that became Nextel.

"A lot of people are afraid of change. You live with it each and every day," he said.

Warner provided free T-shirts to students, black with his image emblazoned in red, and encouraged them to check out his Web site.

He also took questions from the students, who lined up six deep on each side of the room to ask about issues like global warming, gas prices, gay marriage, abortion, Iraq and the job market.

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